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ABSTRACT

This report describes a pilot study in the use of video tape as a recording and reporting device for a child's responses in a learning situation. It was believed that video tape could be used as an improved means of home-school communication. Nineteen 5-year-old subjects in groups of six were videotaped for 12-minute segments in actual classroom situations. At a scheduled parent-teacher conference, both parents of each child (separated by a screen to eliminate partner influence) viewed the tape and recorded 5 specific items of their child's behavior on the form provided. Student behavior categories were: (1) intent on ongoing work, (2) remark which is task oriented, (3) non-task oriented remark, (4) daydreaming, and (5) fidgeting. Using the tape method, parents were able to see their child's problems and potentials directly and without initial elaboration by the teacher at the parent conference. Parents initiated the comments and the teacher became a participant in the evaluation rather than the judge. Parents compared their tabulations after viewing the tape, often revealing inconsistent expectations between parents. Fathers were usually responsive to more items in a given segment of time than the mothers. Study findings suggest that use of video tape might help identify a child's learning pattern or consistent school life pattern. (Author/AJ)

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FINAL REPORT

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A STUDY IN THE UTILIZATION OF TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHER-PARENT-CHILD ASSESSMENT

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PREFACE

Through observation of children, both the teacher and parents become more aware of the heredity-environment impact that has been made by the home and what makes the transition from home to school an adjustment issue for all children in one degree or another. With this early awareness we should be more able to approach a preventive program rather than a corrective one in the area of the child's adjustment to his society.

With the kind help of the Board of Governors of the Consortium of Research Development of the Wisconsin State Universities, Paul C. Holman, Associate Director WSU-CORD, Dr. John C. Pearson, Director of the University Laboratory School, Dr. Hildegard Kuse, Primary Team Leader, Mr. Dennis Fields, co-worker-cameraman, and the parents and children in the K (age 5) Group at the Laboratory School, this project had its being.

I. An Approach

This report describes a pilot study in the utilization of technological advanced techniques for teacher-parent, child assessment. Evaluating the use of video tape as a recording and reporting device for a child's responses in a learning situation was the task.

For years teachers and parents have been concerned with observing and reporting the behavior of children. Basically the child's behavior is characterized in terms of these four areas: social, mental, physical, and emotional. How the parents and the teacher view his development is of vital concern to the child's welfare.

Communicating the child's behaviorial record from the school to the home or from the home to the school has continued to be quite a challenge. The report card, parent conference, and other forms have been used for this purpose. In a review of writings, however, no aspects of the use of video tape in recording behavior for the teacher-parent conference could be found. With the rapid advancement in the mass communication and with its great impact on our culture, it would seem probable that shis media should be reviewed in the light of better home-school communication. Can new technical equipment serve the area of home-school relationship in any way, was the immediate problem. Possible prediction of a child's learning behavior might become an interesting outgrowth of this project.

The purpose then, was to videotape the kindergarten child in an actual classroom situation, and to use this tape in a parent-teacher conference. It was believed that parents would be able to see their child's problems and

his potentials directly and without elaboration by the teacher.

Goals of human behavior are multiple and mixed rather than simple and one-directional. It is inevitable that there exists some measure of conflict in the attainment of these goals. For example, we often expect children readily to adopt goals that are considered "good for them." It would be sheer puppetry to pursue goals in some fashion without regard for their own needs and capabilities. If we are to achieve healthy learning and behavior, the child must be helped to:

1. recognize
2. clarify
3. cope

with such conflicting goals.

Cronbach[1] believes that there are three basic principles that must be carried in mind in diagnosing behavior:

1. Any action is an attempt to satisfy some need.
2. Every pupil has consistent behavior patterns which run through his actions in many situations. These patterns are stable over long periods of time.
3. Any pattern is the result of many causes, and any single cause may lead to many different sorts of adaptations.

This study has raised additional questions such as:

1. How important might the video tape be as a means of finding consistent patterns?
2. Could a taped record at various periods of time focusing on an individual's learning pattern help identify certain contributing causes?

[1] Cronbach, Lee J. EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY. Harcourt, Brace, and Co. Chicago. 1954. p. 151.

II. Method

Twenty-four children in the K (age 5) Group of the University Laboratory School at Stevens Point, Wisconsin were used in this study. Six children at a time were video taped. Each taping session lasted from 12 to 15 minutes. The grouping of children in each 12 minute segment of tape was selected at random with availability becoming a deciding factor. Children present, a given day, the time of day the camera and cameramen were available, the availability of an aid to work with the remaining children all influenced who could be assigned to any given group of six. The range of the video camera lens became the basis of selecting the number of children used in one taping session.

Every child in this study was taped in a setting that involved a class discussion of a children's newspaper. The regular classroom teacher presented the material and made every effort to follow the usual teaching pattern. The cameraman was aware of the learning task and the behavior being studied. He was instructed to focus on the child who responded orally if possible and at other times to attempt to show each child in the group for a given number of seconds at a time. One limitation of this procedure is the fact that children on the ends of a semi-circle will not be scanned by the camera as often as the child in the middle. Taping was done during the first semester.

Parent conferences took place early in the second semester. Each set of parents was given an hour of time on Saturdays or after school or in some cases an evening time to view and record the child's interaction.

Because of the engrossing or sometimes startling initial experience of seeing their child on video tape, the parents viewed the tape once for acclimation. Then the items of behavior selected and the procedure of recording the behavior were explained and the tape was viewed again. The form used by the parents is shown in Figure I. (The actual form was mimeographed on one-inch squared graph paper. Parents had more room to record their responses than is shown below).

Figure I

ORIENTATION TO TASK

LOCATION: In this set of circumstances with these children present, and the subject matter being thus and so, the child behaved in this way.

SITUATION: Class discussion of a newspaper

GLOSSARY OF BEHAVIOR:

1. Intent on ongoing work
2. Remark which is task oriented
3. Non-tast oriented remark
4. Daydreaming
5. Fidgeting

Minutes _____ Frequencies

1 2 3 4 5 6

Behavior

_____

7 8 9 10 11 12

_____

Observer_____
Relationship_____
Child_____
Date_____
Comment_____

Totals 1-2-3-4-5-6
Greatest
Frequency_____

A small folding screen was placed between the two parents to provide a type of isolation that would help them to evaluate more independently and

accurately items important for interpreting or understanding their child's school behavior without being influenced by their partner's marking action.

III. Results

Parent-teacher conferences often focus on the ecology of the classroom. How the pupil interacts in his school environment is the point of concern for both the parents and the teacher. To communicate this in words with different meaning for different people results in only partial understanding of any problem. With the aid of the video tape the parents became "person-watchers." The parent and teacher together saw answers in terms of the child's perceptions of the present situation, recognizing clearly that these perceptions are a function of both the life history and biological make-up of the child. Based upon oral and written comments both the parents and teacher felt that the video tape did provide a more adequate means of authentic situations for assessing the child's school behavior in a specific school task.

From the original list of twenty-four children taped, nineteen pairs of parents completed the total process of observation and recording. The number of minutes of tape each parent observed and totaled, was twelve.

The items in the Glossary of Behavior shown in Figure I were chosen from a longer list taken from "Studying the Child In School."[1] Only five items were selected because the parent had to keep this sequence of five in mind as he viewed the tape.

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1 Gordon, Ira. STUDYING THE CHILD IN SCHOOL. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1966.

The selected items represent those that, in the writer's experience, parents seem to inquire about most frequently. The items were arranged in a sequence with those items of major importance first in the list. An additional explanation of each of the five categories was made in the following terms:

1. Is the child trying to participate
2. Is he making comments related to the topic
3. Whispering to classmate might be an example of a non-task oriented comment. (It might be noted that it was not always possible to determine if such behavior was non-task oriented. For example, by reading lips of one child in the video tape it was determined that the child who appeared to be whispering while another child was making a task oriented statement was also commenting about the topic. She just hadn't been the one chosen to do it aloud.)
4. Daydreaming was further described as looking off into the distance, to one side or at fingers in the lap
5. Examples of fidgeting included tapping fingers, putting pencil into the mouth, etc. A change in body position such as shifting weight or moving the feet was not considered as fidgeting.

Parents were assured that items 4 and 5 were usual or something that might be expected. In arriving at a definition of the various categories many parents cited their own possible examples before the investigator provided further clarification.

After parents were familiar with the form and glossary of behavior and after they had seen the video tape once for orientation purposes the investigator proceeded to let them mark the form by writing the number of the kind of behavior they identified in the appropriate time square on their form. The investigator used a stop watch for timing and called out the number of each minute segment as the time elapsed. She also wrote the number of the time on the board so the parent had a visual reference if needed. How many items of behavior were the parents able to identify?

Table I shows fathers', mothers' and total responses.

TABLE I

NUMBER OF PARENT RESPONSES USING GLOSSARY OF BEHAVIOR

Item	Mother	Father	Both
Intent on Work	231	256	487
Task Oriented Remark	205	228	433
Non-Task Remark	36	32	68
Daydreaming	19	51	70
Fidgeting	144	163	307
Total	635	730	1365

It would appear from this table that the tape was able to record at least one thousand three hundred and sixty-five references to behavior. It shows that one parent, the father, saw more items of behavior than the mother. The first item listed in the glossary of behavior evoked the most responses.

Some added items of interest were the comparisons of how mothers and fathers looked at their child, sometimes with very differing expectations. This disclosed additional inconsistencies in parent expectations with which a child is expected to cope. A comparison of how mothers and fathers may differ in their view of their child's behavior is shown in Table II and is based upon a count of items from the Glossary of Behavior checked by each.

TABLE II

A COMPARISON OF PARENT AWARENESS OF CERTAIN BEHAVIORS

Item	Mother	Father	Differences Between Parents*
Intent on Work	231	256	25+
Task oriented Remark	205	228	23+
Non-Task Remark	36	32	4-
Daydreaming	17	51	32+
Fidgeting	144	163	19+
Total	635	730	95+

* + More items checked by father.... - More items checked by mother

From a study of Table II it was interesting to note that the fathers' eye evidently was more sensitive or responsive to more items in a given segment of time than was the mothers'. Almost one hundred more items of behavior were "caught" by fathers. One might wonder if the mothers' more constant contact with the child has caused them to lose some of their sensitivity or if they have built up an "immunization" toward varied elements of a child's interaction with his environment.

In the "intent on ongoing work" fathers saw 9% more than mothers and heard 9% more remarks that were task oriented. The fathers' eye caught more fidgeting than mothers' by 11%. In daydreaming the fathers were more sensitive to a child's withdrawal from class activity such as staring into space and apparently not thinking about work which might be accompanied by aimless fiddling or doodling activity. The greatest difference, a difference of 66%

was found here.

The concern for non-task oriented remarks was not too different. However it was this item in which mothers did observe the small count of 4 more than their mates.

It can be noted that the items of behavior that were concerned with the task, numbers one and two, decidedly received top priority in the items totaled. A question for interesting further study is "why" this happened. Factors such as the environment, characteristics of the five-year-old in his beginning school tasks, parent's attitudes toward the child's first school experiences, types of tasks performed or the teacher's behavior are all a part of the segment of video tape used in this study.

Can technologically advanced techniques make a more adequate facility in providing authentic situations for assessing the child's school behavior? The observational records disclosed that the total time of viewing was three hours and forty-eight minutes. The total items recorded were one thousand three hundred and sixty-five. Could one mother and one father, plus one teacher in a twelve minute traditional conference have accomplished the same?

IV. Limitations and advantages of video tape

In addition to those items cited in the results some of the following strengths and weaknesses appeared during the study. The items that follow are based upon remarks by parents in the experience of the investigation.

One possible limitation for use of this technique in the regular classroom setting is the problem of scheduling parent conference times. To get both parents to come at the same time, it was necessary to use evening and

Saturday periods. To save on threading time and shifting from one tape segment to another, parents of children who appeared in the same group were if possible scheduled for the same day. This also created problems in scheduling.

In some cases only one parent could come for a conference. The usual recording procedure was used but the benefit of conferring or comparing with the other parent was lost. These single conferences are not reported in the results of this study but nevertheless furnished for those parents the benefits of the video taped conference.

Use of this media depends upon the availability of an assistant to do the camera work and an aide to work with the remaining children when a small group is being taped. This work could however be done by training parent aides to help. The equipment was handled entirely by the teacher during the playback conference and poses no real problem other than availability of the tape and equipment.

Parent comment regarding the technique was generally enthusiastic. Questions and comments regarding the child's responses were spontaneous and specific. All three participants in the discussion following the tape (usually about 15 minutes were allowed in the schedule for this) were able to identify the behavior to which they referred without recourse to vague general descriptions.

It was not necessary for the teacher to give an initial description of the child. With a tape used first the parents initiated the comments and the teacher because a participant in the evaluation rather than the judge.

Use of the glossary of behavior was an essential part of the program. It provided a basis for parent education and orientation. The total tallies highlighted those items the participants felt most important and gave them a basis for comparing

comparing their viewpoints.

Use of video tape provides an opportunity for participation of fathers in a way that is usually not possible because of work schedules.

Because six children were involved, the technique does require careful, tactful handling of showing the behavior of "somebody else's child". The teacher or school may wish to obtain parent permission for use of the procedure in its initial stages. After the tapes are being used it is likely to become evident that no greater opportunity for minding someone else's youngster exists than would be in an ordinary classroom observation. Such opportunity is in fact minimized because the parents are kept so busy tallying the responses of their own child and because the teacher can screen the tapes used for viewing.

Opportunities exist for discussion of or calling attention to behavior on a video tape that could not be done in the regular classroom because of teacher involvement in teaching and distraction resulting from adults talking about children with them present.

V. Further Implications

Leaving the element of time in a specific parent conference and looking at the element of time in a child's total school life, this study has raised some interesting questions as noted earlier. They bear repeating.

1. How important might the video tape be as a means of finding consistent patterns of a child's total school life?

2. Could a taped record at various periods of time focusing on an individual's learning pattern help to isolate a consistent pattern?

A further study could explore ways of finding preventive measures to be taken before common classroom incidents arise.

Knowing that the human being is a unique individual physically, it must follow that his thinking apparatus is also individual. With this in mind why can we not assume that each person has by nature an individual learning pattern? Rather than worry about "if" he is learning, we should find "how" he is learning.

A STUDY IN THE UTILIZATION OF TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHER-PARENT-CHILD ASSESSMENT

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SUMMARY

The kindergarten teacher often finds conventional written reports with an emphasis upon academic and social progress difficult to use effectively with parents of five year olds.

In a study conducted with five year olds at the University Laboratory School at Wisconsin State University-Stevens Point the use of video tape as an alternate form of communication as well as a means of parent orientation was assessed. It was hypothesized that parents would be able to see and also, evaluate their child's learning behavior directly without initial elaboration by the teacher. The teacher's role in the conference would then become one of a co-observer and consultant rather than a reporter and judge.